

metrics to include in the templates. In addition, the UI module **420** allows the end-user to specify parameters of the templates and/or metrics, such as the name of the template and how to represent and display the metric.

[0051] A rendering module **422** works in combination with the UI module **420** and/or other modules in the mapping engine **118** to render a display illustrating the map and metrics from the active templates. FIG. 5 shows an example of a display **500** produced by the rendering module **422** according to one embodiment. This display **500** illustrates a map and metrics that are displayed when a “house hunting” template is active. The illustrated map and metrics are merely representative examples, and other embodiments can show different maps and/or metrics.

[0052] The display **500** has two primary areas, a map area **510** and a metrics panel **512**. Generally, the map area **510** shows the map and any metrics that are configured to appear on the map. The map area **510** includes a reference point **514** on which the metrics are based. In one embodiment, the reference point is a location on the map, such as the center of the displayed region. In another embodiment, the reference point is controlled by the mouse or other input device and can be freely moved on the map by the end-user. The metrics are updated in real time as the reference point changes.

[0053] An arrow **516** on the display indicates a direction and distance from the reference point **514** to an ocean view. In this embodiment, the length of the arrow **516** indicates the quality of the view, and the width of an arc associated with the arrow indicates the width of the view. A text label on the map indicates the distance to the view. The ocean view arrow **516** is an example of a computed metric determined by the metric computation module **418** based on other metrics, such as topographical information and building height information.

[0054] Three vector arrows **518A-C** on the map, indicate the direction and distance to other points on the map. These other points can be directly specified by the end-user and/or template. For example, the end-user can place a point at a potential employer, e.g., “Google” and the arrow **518A** represents the direction and distance to the employer from the reference point. The road to the employer is also labeled with “To Google.” In addition, the points can be specified indirectly. For example, arrow **518B** points to the nearest grocery store, a SAFEWAY, and arrow **518C** points to the nearest school **520**, Lincoln Elementary School. In one embodiment, these indirectly specified points are updated in real time as the reference point changes.

[0055] Two concentric lines **522A-B** represent boundaries described in the template. For example, the innermost line **522A** defines areas within 5 minutes driving time, and the outermost line defines areas within 10 minutes driving time. Other embodiments represent other and/or different data.

[0056] In one embodiment, metrics are displayed as graphical images and/or 3-D models. For example, an end-user can hover the cursor over the location of a house on the map, and cause the display **500** to show an image and/or 3-D model of the house. The image/model can appear in the map area **510**, metrics panel **512**, and/or elsewhere on the display **500**.

[0057] The metrics panel **512** displays metrics that are configured to appear in the panel. The illustrated display **500** shows the panel adjacent to the map. In other embodiments, the panel is located at other locations and/or is in a floating

window that can be moved and manipulated by the end-user. The metrics panel **512** includes a variety of different metrics. In one embodiment, each computed metric is determined in real time by the metric computation module **418** in response to the current location of the reference point **514**. The metric can display its value using one or more of a variety of different representations, including textual, numeric, and graphical representations.

[0058] In the illustrated example of the metrics panel **512**, a “distance to highway” metric **514** displays the distance to the nearest major highway as a numeric value (0.5 miles in this example). An “estimated noise” metric **526** uses a bar indicator to show the estimated noise at the reference point. Two bar graphs **528**, **529** respectively indicate the distance to the nearest commercial property, and the traffic load for nearby roads. A “municipality” text box **530** shows the name of the municipality containing the reference point **514**, which in this example is “Mountain View.”

[0059] An “average price per square foot” metric **532** uses a sliding scale and number to indicate its value, while a “tax index” metric **534** shows the cost per year. A crime rate metric **535** represents its value as a ranking from one to 10. A “nearest elementary school” metric **536** displays multiple sub-metrics for the school **520** displayed in the map **510**, including the school’s ranking (based on external data and/or end-user defined criteria), the distance to it, and whether one would need to cross a highway when traveling from the reference point **514** to the school.

[0060] A “distance to work places” metric **538** displays numeric values indicating the distance to one or more work places defined by the template and/or end-user. In this example, the metric displays the distance to two locations, “Google” and “Acme.” A volume control **520** controls the volume of a multimedia metric. The multimedia metric provides audio/visual data to the end-user based on the location of the reference point **514**. Finally, a “my ranking” metric **542** uses a graphical indicator (three out of four stars) and a numeric indicator (“3”) to rank the designated location using criteria specified by the template and/or end-user. Although not shown in FIG. 5, in one embodiment, the rendering module **422** displays ads received from the ad server module **314** in the map area **510**, metrics panel **512**, and/or elsewhere in the display.

[0061] FIG. 6 is a flow chart illustrating steps performed by the mapping engine **118** according to one embodiment. Different embodiments perform additional and/or different steps. In addition, other embodiments perform the steps in different orders. While FIG. 6 illustrates steps from the perspective of the mapping engine **118**, one of skill in the art will recognize that complementary steps are performed by the map server **110**, metrics server **112**, end-user, and/or other entities.

[0062] The mapping engine **118** receives **610** one or more templates. The engine **118** can receive pre-made templates from the metrics server **112** or elsewhere on the network **114**. For example, mapping engine **118** can present the end-user with a UI that allows the end-user to select from among the templates stored at the metrics server **112**. In addition, the engine **118** can receive the templates as the end-user uses the client **116** to design new templates and/or modify existing templates. In one embodiment, the mapping engine **118** stores the templates for subsequent use.

[0063] The mapping engine **118** receives **612** a designation of an active template. For example, the end-user can use